

Extremism in Pakistan's Society and the Role of Madrassas: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract: A topic of discussion in the twenty-first century is the connection between madrassas and extremism. After terrorists launched one of the deadliest attacks on American soil on September 11, 2001, which claimed almost 3000 lives, it gained attention on a global scale. The outcry that followed led to Muslim countries being scrutiny and labeled as the "other," drawing attention from throughout the world. Islamic learning institutions like madrassas appear under increasing global attention when different claims were made that they were encouraging and fostering "anti-western" attitudes among the populace, which in turn was fueling terrorism in Muslim countries. As America entered with force in Afghanistan in October 2001, a significant image of the Muslim community in the western media was the Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. The media's focus on madrassas conveniently ignored the numerous socioeconomic roles that these institutions play in the Muslim community area by giving poor people access to necessary education and instead formed an impression that all madrassas are linked to terrorism and extremism. The function that Islamic madrassas play in encouraging religious extremism in Pakistan has been objectively examined in this study.

Keywords: Religious Extremism, Madrassa Institutions, Pakistan.

1 Introduction

Since August 1947, when Pakistan gained independence, a Pakistani national identity based on religion exists. As a result, the expansion of religious radicalism in Pakistani people has been remarkably smooth. This opinionated allegiance to a philosophical state transformed over time into a tactical devotion to jihad principles¹. An important factor in the development of extremism as the primary driving power at the back of the terrorists in Pakistan was the religious educational scheme that was used as a practical instrument for jihad. The Islamic Seminary, also known as a "Madrassa," is a place of higher learning that primarily teaches spiritual matters such as Islamic law, Arabic, explanation of the Qur'an, and Prophet Muhammad's sayings. Even though Sunnis and Shias are among the major Islamic sects represented by madrassas, Pakistan is a Sunni-majority state, hence most of the madrassas there are Sunni-owned.

In Pakistan, there are now significantly more Madrassas than there were during and after the eleven-year dictatorship of General Zia ul Haque, who controlled the nation in the 1980s. Poverty is the most important factor in that many of the poorest individuals preferred to get admission of their kids to madrassas relatively than government schools, which led to a significant shift in the intellectual outlook of the majority of the population. The poorest families in Pakistan frequently send their children to religious schools because they offer food and housing to the students. However, this rapid development of religious education led to a drop in the level of scholarly achievement in society as a whole.²

The moderate Muslim scholars place a strong emphasis on social harmony, tolerance, and peace, while numerous madrassas

1 Pakistan: between mosque and military, Choice (Chicago, Ill.), 43(05) ,2006. , 43-3032-43-3032. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.43-3032>

2 Roberts, M, The making of terrorism in Pakistan: Historical and social roots of extremism. By Eamon Murphy. New York, ,2015

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have been linked to religious extremism. Jihad (an idea of holy war in Islam) in Afghanistan against the Soviet army sowed the seeds of extremism in the country, and numerous religious institutions in various parts of the country prepared a human force for this purportedly Jihadi fight in the neighboring nation.

Everyone is aware that Pakistan served as a major ally in the US-led global campaign against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the 1980s, and the country's madrassa population of a particular school of Islam swiftly expanded during that period to support the Mujahidin cause. It was the Afghan War, and not only did madrassas play a part in it; but college and university students were also directly affected by the events. After that, extremists left over from the Afghan Jihad tried to reintegrate into Pakistani society, which led to an increase in extremism in the years that followed, particularly the after the Cold War and post-9/11 periods. Pakistan has been dealing with terrorists and extremism seriously for the past 35 years from the time of the jihad in Afghanistan³.

Understanding and defining extremism

There is no agreed definition of extremism. Extremism relies significantly on who is defining it and in what context because it is a phenomenon that is context-based. Something that is typical for one individual or society may be a harmful or excessive action in another society. Fundamentally, "extremism refers to a viewpoint or set of views that go against the accepted social standards, and violent extremism refers to a system of viewpoints and behaviors that back up using aggression to further one's objectives". Extremism can be related to religion, ideology, ethnicity, politics, culture, race, and behavior since it can appear in all facets of human identities. Only religious extremism is the subject of this study work. Religious extremism is defined by UNESCO as "attitudes and behaviors that encourage violence to further religious objectives. Such fanaticism manifests itself through terrorism". Although they are connected but not the same thing, extremism and terrorism are two distinct happenings. Religion-related violence is a form of radicalism; it is the ultimate manifestation of that extremism and a continuation of it. As the name implies, terrorism is distinct from extremism in that terrorism is used to forward the objectives of terrorism. A terrorist is undoubtedly an extremist, even though they are not necessarily the same thing.⁴

2 Historical Context of Madrassas

The madrassas in Pakistan provide low-cost religious instruction to members of the underprivileged community who cannot afford to attend public schools. The madrassas have produced many notable persons and personalities and were centers of excellence for Islamic learning. It may be argued that they are currently influencing society in a conservative way. Some even go so far as to claim that madrassas in Pakistan and abroad are breeding a religious class of violent fanatics. The radicalization of certain groups in Pakistani society could be better understood by reviewing recent occurrences.⁵

When Russia entered Afghanistan in 1979, it became clear that this was going to be the last front in the Cold War between the US and Russia. The US supported Islamist proxies (the 'Afghan Mujahideen') to defeat the Russian forces in Afghanistan with the aid of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The militant groups, especially from the Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith schools of thought, began "purging" Pakistan of "infidel Shias" in Afghanistan when Russia was defeated and withdrew from that country in 1989. With the addition of violence, the Afghan "Jihad" gave the Sunni-Shia rivalry in Pakistan a new dimension. Following Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979, which recognized Shia Islam as the official state religion, the Sunni-Shia conflict began a new chapter. There has been a resurgence of rivalry to gain more clout in the Middle East and beyond due to concerns that Iran may export Shi'ism to other nations.⁶ The ensuing eight-year Iran-Iraq War served as the catalyst for Saudi Arabia and Iran's sectarian rivalry.

Civil war erupted after the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan. By planting seeds of hatred and bloodshed, the negative effects of the Afghan war on Pakistan's religious peace were detrimental. The Pakistani madrassas were politicized along sectarian lines by General Zia-ul-Haq, who served as President from 1978 to 1988, and he utilized them to combat the jihad in Afghanistan. This change made madrassas open to outside exploitation for political and other reasons. Numerous Pakistani governments have attempted to change the madrassa system for a long time, but their efforts have largely failed because of a lack of political will and inadequate policy strategy and implementation. Madrassas and militant religious organizations may have developed as substitute providers of these services as various Pakistani governments no longer provide fundamental social and welfare services to the general populace. This gave these organizations both a fervent political following and the

3 Shah, S. S. H., Religious education and extremism in Pakistan: From Deobandi militancy to a rising Sufi fanaticism. *Journal of Education, Culture and Society*, 9(1), 2018, 11–26. <https://doi.org/10.15503/jecs20181.11.26>

4 Hanif, S., Ali, M. H., & Shaheen, F., Religious extremism, religiosity and sympathy toward the Taliban among students across madrassas and worldly education schools in Pakistan. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 33(3), 2021, 489–504. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1548354>

5(N.d.). Jstor.org. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from https://www.jstor.org/stable/26402134#metadata_info_tab_contents

6 Bureau of democracy, human rights, and labor. (2017, January 20). United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-civilian-security-democracy-and-human-rights/bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/>

ability to exert pressure.⁷

3 Categorization of madrassas in Pakistan

In Pakistan, madaris are organized according to factions, and each faction has a system of madrassas that it administers through a board known as a Wafaq. Every board has its own arrangement of instruction, and students receive certificates and take part in yearly tests. Pakistan has five madrassa boards, also known as wafaqs, and they are all affiliated with Ittehad Tanzeemat Madaaris Deenia (ITMD), a confederation of madaris that was founded in 2003. ⁸ These are as following;

- a) Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Arabia (Deobandi)
- b) Tanzeem ul-Madaaris (Barelvi)
- c) Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Salafia.(Ahl-e-Hadith)
- d) Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Shia (Shia)
- e) Rabita ul-Madaaris al-Islamia (Jama'at-e-Islami)

A) Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Arabia (Deobandi)

Despite the fact that there are more Barelvis than Deobandis in the Sunni religion, Deobandis have many more religious institutions in Pakistan because their religious action seems to be well-organized.⁹ Involved with Wafaq ul- Madaaris al-Arabia, Deobandi madaris are licensed in roughly 16,800 numbers. In addition, the total number includes hifz, tajweed, and dars-e-nizami madaaris. Within Deobandi madrassas, Jamia Ashrafia Lahore and Dar ul-Uloom Korangi Karachi stand out due to their independence and the fact that the government had previously validated their diplomas and degrees during the Zia ul-Haq administration. The Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Arabia examination board is where their pupils also take part, too.¹⁰

B) Tanzeem ul-Madaaris (Barelvi)

There are approximately 8,000 registered madrassas linked with Tanzeem ul-Madaaris, which is fewer than half of all Deobandi madaaris. The Sufism that predominated in the subcontinent is adhered to by the Barelvi sect. Dar ul-Uloom Muhammadia Ghosia Bhera, has 400 divisions, and Minhaj ul-Quran, that has discipline and institution having contemporary learning, stand out inside the system of Barelvi madrassas because they did not associate with Tanzeem ul-Madaaris and have distinct educational and assessment methods.¹¹

C) Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Salafia.(Ahl-e-Hadith)

The Ahl-e-Hadith, having a few numbers with 1,400 recorded madaris connected with Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Salafia in Pakistan, is the other Sunni sect. Given that their beliefs are similar to those of Abdul Wahhab, Pakistanis frequently refer to such a grouping as the Wahhabis and/or Salafis. . In Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Salafia, the divisive Jama'at ud-Dawa madaaris are as well listed. The single madrassa inside the Salafi that is impartial in terms of tests and grants degrees with government recognition is Jamia Salafia Faisalabad.¹²

D) Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Shia (Shia)

Despite being a minority, Shias in Pakistan have a sizable number of Madaaris; 413 of them are listed in Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Shia. In Pakistan's Shia religion, there isn't a specific seminary with the power to confer degrees or conduct exams on its own.

E) Rabita ul-Madaaris al-Islamia (Jama'at-e-Islami)

The Jama'at-e-Islami is a Reconstructionist and religious as well as a political force that prides itself on being the "forefront" of the Islamic upheaval in the country. It was formed by the well-known Islamic thinker Ab'ul ala Mawdudi. It has an independent attitude and is not associated with any one sect.

7(N.d.). Jstor.org. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from https://www.jstor.org/stable/26402134#metadata_info_tab_contents

8 (N.d.-b). Researchgate.net. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311913131_Madrassa_Education_in_Pakistan_Controversies_Challenges_and_Prospects

9 Rahman, T. MADRASAS: The potential for violence in Pakistan? In *Madrassas in South Asia* (1st Edition, pp. 71–94). Routledge, 2007.

10 (N.d.-b). Researchgate.net. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311913131_Madrassa_Education_in_Pakistan_Controversies_Challenges_and_Prospects

11 Ibid

12 Ibid

The madrassa system Rabita ul Madaaris of Jama'at-e-Islami is home to roughly 1,000 registered madaaris.¹³

4 The Curriculum of Madrassas

The value and applicability of the material educated in the seminaries cannot be ignored when examining the role of madrassas as educational institutions. Dars-e-Nizami is the name of the curriculum presently taught in institutions. It was created by Mulla Nizamuddin Sihalwi, a scholar from the Farangi Mahal Madrassa in Lucknow, which is currently in India.¹⁴ All traditional madrassas follow it, with the exception of those serving the Shia community. Its curriculum's text is at least 500 years old. Since the greater part of pupils struggles to comprehend Arabic literature, this lesson makes use of annotations and explanations made by Hanafi Ulema, a medieval scholar. Students frequently memorize the original text without fully comprehending its context or significance. Students suffer as a result of a lack of opportunity to use analytical skills and come up with a limited view of the Scripture and the wider world. Local academics have drawn attention to this phenomenon and argue that the old madrassa learning and teaching methods should be modified because they show a stagnation of knowledge. The problem of hostility toward other factions is another concern of the syllabus educated at religious institutions. That area of the public education system in Pakistan has grown into a significant obstacle to combating radical organizations because of a syllabus that is assumed of promoting aggression in the name of religion Islam even as disregarding fundamental history, science, and mathematics. The majority of madrassas, as noted by Rebecca Winthrop and Corninne Graff, do not offer secular or vocational education; instead, they have strict curricula that place a strong emphasis on rote memorization. Although supported by scant data, it has been asserted that they purposefully teach their pupils to reject Western concepts and have limited worldviews, failing to prepare them adequately for life in the real world.¹⁵ The curriculum might be updated to include contemporary research and advanced courses, bringing it up to speed with the current educational system. There are two significant problems with madrasah curricula. The first is the strict interpretation of all concepts in accordance with a single sect's dogma, which generally rejects all other understandings as spurious. In society, this frequently fosters hatred and division. Second, it might be argued that the existing curricula misinterpret and misunderstand the meaning of jihad as it is expressed in the Quran and Hadith; it encourages students to embrace militancy rather than the actual meaning of jihad when it comes to advancing their faith. In order to get rid of this form of interpretation, the curriculum needs to be revised. For the essential changes to be implemented on the ground, political will and intent must be shown. Although this procedure may take some time, it should ultimately be advantageous for both the state and the kids.¹⁶

5 Spread of extremism in after 9/11 in Pakistan

After 9/11, the environment completely shifted in 2001. Historically many of the madrassas in Pakistan were accused of recruiting and training grounds for terrorism in the years before 9/11 by militant groups. The madrassa was reportedly originally identified as a regional hub for militancy and terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11. Madrassas had before urged its pupils to join the Afghan Mujahideen on Afghan soil. The "Haqqania" Madrassa in Pakistan, run by the Deobandi religious leader Maulana Sami ul Haque, was allegedly a major factor in inspiring the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union. The Afghan Jihad was also supported by other Pakistani religious and political organizations, Jamat e Islami and Jamiat Ulmaye Islam (JUI), both of which were led by Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman. Along with Afghans and Pakistanis, volunteers from Arab nations, Central Asian nations, North African Muslim nations, and Caucasian Muslim regions were also drawn to the Islamic seminaries to fight in the Afghan conflict.¹⁷ The skilled jihadi aspects of these madrasahs persisted and proliferated throughout Pakistani society shortly after the Afghan Jihad and also turned inward to struggle against sectarian rivals there. One example of factional aggression by the Deobandi organization in Pakistan is the Sipah-e-Sahaba faction of Deobandi organizations. Musharraf's government took power and expelled a number of the such warrior organizations, which include Jaish-e-Mohammed (JM) and Lashkar-e-Tayaba (LT), also a number of sectarian organizations, mostly violent Deobandi and Shia

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Anadolu Agency, Modernising madrassas: Pakistan's response to tackle extremism. The Express Tribune, 2019

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1980160/modernising-madrassas-pakistans-response-tackle-extremism>

¹⁵ Delavande, A., & Zafar, B, Stereotypes and madrassas: Experimental evidence from Pakistan. Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 118, 2019, 247–267. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2015.03.020>

¹⁶ Preventing Terrorism from Students of Extremist Madrasahs: An Overview of Pakistan's efforts. (n.d.). Casstt.com. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from <https://casstt.com/post/preventing-terrorism-from-students-of-extremist-madrasahs-an-overview-of-pakistan-s-efforts/527>

¹⁷ Shah, S. S. H. Religious education and extremism in Pakistan: From Deobandi militancy to a rising Sufi fanaticism. Journal of Education, Culture and Society, 9(1), 2018, 11–26. <https://doi.org/10.15503/jecs20181.11.26>

groups, like Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Tehrik. 18 The Musharraf administration suggested measures for the registration and regulation of madrasa systems in addition to limitations on extremist organisations. The government published an ordinance that placed a strong emphasis on the madrasas' need for formal registration and financial oversight. The administration of the madrasa was also provided with financial support, new curricula, and teacher training under the new regulations. Despite being an important project for the madrasa system reform, it was not fully completed because of disagreements between government agencies and between the government and the nation's religious leaders. To be able to combat the danger of radicalism, notably Deobandi radicalism that the government itself produced during the 1980s Afghan War, Musharraf's dictatorship began to politicize Sufi Islam by empowering Barelvis.¹⁹

6 Impacts of Madrasahs on Society

As they give the community free education and housing, madrasas regard themselves as stewards of Islam's teachings. In educating students for life in societies that are quickly modernizing and newly developing worldwide information economy, madrasas encounter a variety of difficulties.²⁰ There are many factors that contribute to the development of a radicalized approach in the madrasas, including financial liability, societal division and strife, sectarian conflicts, the use of religious conviction for political ends, and misinterpretations of religion, particularly the conception of jihad. Fundamentalists have varyingly employed jihad as a motivating and unifying force.²¹ Some madrasas radicalize their pupils to the point where they are prepared to engage in violent acts that they perceive as being required by their religion. Madrasa students are occasionally instructed that it is their responsibility to put an end to any "immoral" behavior and take up arms against any organization that veers from the straight path. Innocent young brains are groomed to adhere to the "Holy War" through such indoctrination. The heads of a few of these factional organizations also urge their supporters and pupils to discord in society by using hateful speeches and literature.²²

7 The Current Challenges of Madrasahs

After the National Action Plan, serious efforts to register and regulate madrasas began (NAP). In its election campaign, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) party promised to "map and schedule all madaris in Pakistan, collecting details on funds, and initiate English and math lessons as prescribed courses inside the madrasas program of study."²³ As assuming control, PTI has advanced in this area. In an effort to take firm action against prohibited organisations, the government declared in March 2019 that it had taken the power of 182 spiritual schools and jailed 182 individuals.²⁴ Additionally, Major General Asif Ghafoor, a former military commander, declared in a television interview that "Pakistan's government had determined that such madrasas would be commercialized."²⁵ He continued by saying that as part of this initiative, the government intends the initiative for more than 30,000 madrasas, where more than 2.5 million students currently attend school, and to implement a contemporary learning program to better prepare the students for life in the modern world. The bulk of madrasas still base their current curriculum on memorizing passages from the Holy Quran. As a result, as compared to students who attended colleges and universities, madrasa students continue to lag behind in terms of practical skills. Madrasa graduates have extremely few job options because, if they're lucky, the only jobs they can obtain are teaching Arabic or Islamic studies in schools or starting their own madrasas. While some go on to become imams, the bulk finds themselves jobless and dissatisfied as a result of the dearth of job possibilities. As a result, society becomes divided along socioeconomic lines, which causes discord and jeopardizes national unity. Controlling hate speech presents another issue for the government of Pakistan, as madrasas frequently provide a fertile environment for extremism and the emergence of radical views, particularly in the case of impressionable young people. In the name of religion, militant groups employ them for their own purposes. However, it is important to keep in mind that the majority of madrasas do not engage in any illegal activities. Only 100 madrasas have been discovered engaging in violent activities, according to Major General Ghafoor,

18 Ibid

19 Ibid

20 Park, J., & Niyozov, S, Madrasa education in South Asia and Southeast Asia: current issues and debates. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 28(4), 2008, 323–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188790802475372>

21 Campbell, A, An investigation into Islamic fundamentalism and an assessment of its relationship with the concept of Jihad, 1992

22 Preventing Terrorism from Students of Extremist Madrasahs: An Overview of Pakistan's efforts. (n.d.). Casstt.com. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from <https://casstt.com/post/preventing-terrorism-from-students-of-extremist-madrasahs-an-overview-of-pakistan-s-efforts/527>

23 PTI Manifesto Final . (n.d.). Scribd. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from <https://www.scribd.com/document/383487528/PTI-Manifesto-Final-2018>

24 Pakistan seizes religious schools in intensified crackdown on militants. (n.d.). *The Daily Observer*. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from <https://www.observerd.com/news.php?id=187171>

25 Anadolu Agency 2019.

while the others provide children with an excellent and efficient education.²⁶ Shafqat Mahmood, the leaders of the five madrassa administrations met with the nation's education minister in May 2019 to advance the reform procedure and bring them under the Ministry of Education's control. Additionally, the minister pledged to help madrassa owners open bank accounts, complete registration procedures, and process visas for prospective international students. We have long demanded that the Education Ministry be granted the obligation, according to Maulana Ibrahim Sakargahi, the spokesperson for Wifaqul Madaris Al-Arabia.²⁷

8 Madrassa and Mosque Reforms in Pakistan

1. National Internal Security Policy (NISP 2014-18)

The first internal protection paper of Pakistan was the NISP 2014–18. The federal cabinet adopted the policy's 64 points in 2014. The report's objective was specified as being internal security. The research also emphasized the need for creating a national narrative to combat atypical dangers with the assistance of devout experts, the intelligentsia, educational bodies, and the media.²⁸ The phrase "madrassa institution cannot be exempted from the domestic security standards of the country" was used for the first time in the NISP 2014–18.²⁹ Five issues were addressed:

- Determining the core causes of radicalization inside madrassas: According to the NISP 2014–18, sectarian indoctrination and outright rejection of other views are key factors in dividing society and stoking racial tensions.³⁰ Given that many terrorists were madrassa students, madrassas and mosques continue to be crucial central clauses for the management in its efforts to halt the spread of aggressive radicalism in the nation.
- Mapping, merging, and mainstreaming mosques and madrassas: According to the strategy statement, mapping mosques and madrassas would help mainstream in comparison to the remaining academic system in the nation. Broad-based religious school and mosque inclusion into the system of public education because then learners and faculty members of these organizations be able to be dynamic participants of a diverse society and perform an optimistic contribution to the country's economy by being part of a skilled worker," stated the NISP 2014–18.³¹
- Stopping the investments for terrorism by using the name of madrasahs: The NISP states that by relating banks in the checking of the surge of funds to assumed organizations, it should be viable for the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and taxes sector to differentiate in both permissible and illegitimate transfer of capital.
- Lawful Reforms: The NISP 2014–18 identified for a reassessment of the state's administrative ability to keep track of, assess, and stop the abuse of the laws that mosques and madrassas are operating under.³²
- Implementing the NISP 2014-18 is the responsibility of NACTA: While the NISP 2014-18 identified for improved control and guideline of madrassas and mosques, NACTA that was founded in 2009 was entrusted with doing so.³³

2. National Internal Security Policy (2018-2023)

The PTI government released the second domestic Security plan manuscript (NISP 2018-2023), which highlighted the ongoing necessity of madrassa and mosque reforms. According to the report, a tremendous amount of progress has been made in the mapping of madrassas, among more than 90% of these madrassas now being recognized and calculated. Additionally, it was stated that initiatives to implement extensive madrassa reforms were well under way.³⁴ The following essentials set in the NISP 2018-2023:

- An innovative national narrative: It promised the creation and dissemination of a "complete state description in opposition to radicalism and terror campaign built on recognition of multiplicity, variety, and peaceful Islamic

26 Associated Press May 2019.

27 Ibid.

28 (N.d.-d). Gov.Pk. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from <https://nacta.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/NationalInternal-Security-Policy-2014.pdf>

29 Ibid., p. 39

30 Ibid., p. 28.

31 Ibid, p. 39.

32 Ibid., p. 8

33 Pakistan's Ministry of Interior 2014-18.

34 (N.d.-c). Gov.Pk. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from <https://www.interior.gov.pk/index.php/downloads/category/32-policies> .

traditions.³⁵ The syllabus in school systems and madrassas would be modified in view of this revised national narrative. The Departments of Education, the Higher Education Commission and NACTA, the national counterterrorism authority, was charged with overseeing execution.

- Violence and extremism not restricted to madrassas: According to the NISP 2018–2023, there is enough data to conclude that radicalization and militancy are not exclusively a problem among madrassas and their pupils. In actuality, wealthy individuals with contemporary educational credentials are also prey to the radical discourses.
- Adoption of minimum national standards: The policy paper requests that public and private educational entities, as well as madrassas, embrace minimal national criteria. ³⁶
- Uniform registration and regularization of madrassas: According to the strategy paper, all provinces will ensure the consistent registration and regularization of madrassas, and as a result, each province will create laws to implement madrasa reforms and simplify them.
- Support in exchange from Madrassa to typical Education System: "Opportunity to move from Madrassa to the regular school arrangement will be built at a point corresponding from 5 to 10 years of schooling," the policy paper states."³⁷
- Increased Collaboration between Madrassa and Mainstream Educational Systems: Increased collaboration between madrassas and traditional school systems was suggested, along with student and teacher swap over courses, collaborative educational and extracurricular events, in order to dispel misconceptions, foster unity, and stimulate a good interchange of ideas.
- Mosques as place of supervision and knowledge: Additionally, according to the NISP 2018-23, mosques would be transformed into places of instruction and guidance. Furthermore, the government should establish description and guiding principle for the sermons given before Friday prayer in conjunction with religious academics, highlighting, among other things, the significance of civic values in the sermons. The city of Islamabad was to host the commencement of a pilot program.
- Training of Imams: A team of religious intellectuals (with depiction from all factions) would be recognized, according to the NISP 2018-23, for the creation of suggested curricula, testing, and coaching for imams.³⁸ The Ministry of Religious Affairs would administer this committee's specific training program, which would be provided to imams. Furthermore, a state-conducted test would guarantee the imams' expertise. The government would provide a monthly stipend to anyone who met the requirements.
- Setting up Libraries at Mosques and Centers for Islamic education: The strategy statement said that government funds would be given to create libraries in mosques and centers for Islamic learning in the direction of the Ministry of Religious Affairs with assistance from the commission of academics.³⁹ The administration would evaluate these financing to confirm accountability. ⁴⁰

9 Conclusion

Madrassas have contributed significantly to Pakistani society's socio-political development since the country gained its freedom. However, it is a sad fact that some of these religious schools have strayed from their initial goals of information dissemination and assistance to the weaker and more vulnerable sectors of society throughout time. They permitted themselves to be used as props by numerous domestic and foreign political figures and organizations. The urgent need is to streamline these madrassas through reforms and align them with Pakistan's more contemporary and secular national educational system. Not only will it lessen extreme and factional inclinations, but it will also help lots of pupils by improving their readiness for the workforce. The government of Pakistan has implemented a variety of anti-terrorism policies

35 Ibid, p. 60.

36 Ibid., p. 47

37 Ibid., p.49.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Preventing Terrorism from Students of Extremist Madrasahs: An Overview of Pakistan's efforts. (n.d.). Casstt.com. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from <https://casstt.com/post/preventing-terrorism-from-students-of-extremist-madrasahs-an-overview-of-pakistan-s-efforts/527>

throughout the years to establish a foundation for the reform and oversight of religious institutions. However, implementation has been woefully lacking. For Islamic societies, the madrassa system has been and continues to be strength, but it needs to be safeguarded from militant extremism. The role of madrassas as educational institutions that uphold fundamental Islamic principles like societal cohesion and tolerance must be reinstated. For the welfare and improvement of the Pakistani people, all stakeholders must band together and make this issue a top priority.

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